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LIGHT, SOUL AND VISIONS IN THE VEDA

BY

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IN THE VEDA



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FOREWORD

In the course of the last some years, Utrecht in the Netherlands had become quite a bee-hive of Indological studies. Many a young aspirant, working under the benign and inspiring tutelage of Professor Jan Gonda, was seen to have made his mark in that field. Surely, one of the more distinguished among these was Hendrik Wilhelm Bodewitz. Bodewitz did his M. A. with honours at the Utrecht University in 1966 with Sanskrit, Indian Religions, and Ancient Greek as his subjects. Soon thereafter he became Lecturer in Sanskrit first at the Utrecht University and in 1969 at the Leiden University. He obtained his Doctorate, also with honours, at Utrecht in 1973 and has been working as Professor of Sanskrit at the Utrecht University since 1976.

Professor Bodewitz has specialized in Vedic Philology, particularly in Vedic ritual texts. Among his major publications may be mentioned (1) *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* I, 1-65, translation and commentary, with a study on Agnihotra and Prāṇāgnihotra, (2) The Daily Evening and Morning Offering (Agnihotra) according to the *Brāhmaṇas*, and (3) The Jyotiṣoma Ritual : *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* I, 66-364, translation and commentary. He has also contributed to prestigious Journals many research papers of great merit, such as "Vedic *anuṣṭhu* and *anuṣṭhyā*", "Vedic *dhāvayati*", "Atharvaveda *Samhitā* 3. 12: the building of a house", "The raising of the central pillar of the *sadas*-hut by the *Udgātr*", "The cosmic, cyclical dying (*parimara*)", "The 'marriage' of heaven and earth", and "*Prāṇa* and *apāna*". Indeed, Professor Bodewitz can be counted among the few most active scholars of the present time working in the field of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the Vedic ritual.

Professor Bodewitz was twice elected Dean of the Faculty of Letters of the Utrecht University. He is a Member of the Royal Dutch Academy and a Founding Member of the Academia Europaea.

He has visited India several times and was present at the performance of the Vedic Agnicayana Sacrifice in Kerala in 1975.

At the invitation of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, Professor Bodewitz very kindly delivered the "Professor P. D. Gune Memorial Lectures" (Fifth Series) as shown below :

December 5, 1989

"Light and Darkness in Vedic India"

December 6, 1989

"Ancient Indian Visionary Literature"

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I am sure that these lectures which are now being published will be received with the same earnestness as when they were actually delivered.

Bhandarkar Oriental
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R. N. Dandekar

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LECTURE I LIGHT AND DARKNESS IN VEDIC INDIA

Introduction

The twin concepts of light and darkness are experienced as a natural dualism by primitive cultures. Light is associated with life and darkness with death (MacCulloch 1915, p. 50). In some developed cultures we find an ethical-philosophical dualism in which light represents good and darkness evil. I quote here in translation Bertholet's dictionary of religions on light and darkness (Bertholet 1985 s. v. " Licht und Finsternis ") : " In the increasing ethicalisation of thought light and darkness are connected with good and evil and this opposition forms the basis of the dualism of religions like Parsism and even more distinctly of Manichaeism, Mandaicism and further Gnosis, in which conceptions like light, lustre, glory play an essential role in statements on the divine " .

Now one may ask how cultures like the Ancient Indian and Iranian interpret this dualism. Here one might take into account that these cultures were not entirely separated from other cultures like the Greek in which an Indo-European language was spoken. Moreover, the Indians, the Persians and the Greek were geographically bordering. However, a common Indo-European conception of light and darkness cannot be reconstructed. Mutual influence in a particular period is more acceptable. Oriental influence (difficult to be specified) may have played a role in two of the pillars of European civilisation, the Classical (especially the Greek) and the Jewish-Christian.

The views on light and darkness of the Greeks on the one hand and of the Ancient Indians and Persians on the other hand did not agree. In Ancient Greece there is hardly any deification of light, whereas in Persia and to some extent in India this deification is more or less prominent.

New developments took place in the period of Hellenism such as worship of the sun, mystery-cults and a dualistic world view (Bultmann 1967, p. 333). Originally the opposition of light and darkness was not ethical in Greece. It did not coincide with the opposition of good and evil as in the later Iranian culture. It was rather an opposition of welfare and calamity. In the Hellenistic dualism, however, there was an opposition between god and the world, between yonder world and this world. The opposition of the sunny world and the darkness of the nether world was replaced by heavenly light and the mortal world which included life on earth. The real light then becomes the heavenly or divine light which is hidden inside man. In the Hellenistic theory of Gnosis sparks of the divine light are regarded as the soul of man. These sparks are enclosed inside the body and should be freed and should rise to the light of heaven. Highest knowledge (Gnosis) is seeing this light. Oriental influence may be assumed here. (See Bultmann 1967, p. 344.)

In Ancient Indian and Iranian cultures we may find some starting points for an ethical-philosophical dualism, but at least in India a full development of this dualism is missing. In Ancient Persia the situation is clearer, though the presence of a dualistic system of thought in Ancient Persia is not undisputed and often every trace of dualism has been too exclusively derived from the Persians (Colpe 1965, pp. 124, 129; Eliade 1958, p. 219; both authors are critical, perhaps too critical).

In the European tradition a pure dualism of the powers of good and evil is only found with the Medieval, unorthodox Christians, the Cathars, who were regarded as heretics and consequently were persecuted. The origin of their beliefs is often traced in Asian Manichaeism (Runciman 1984) and ultimately even in Persian Zoroastrianism. In orthodox Christianity this dualism is missing. Some ideas about the divine, however, are associated with light and here again Oriental influence is possible. We have already observed that the Greeks originally did not identify the divine and light. In the Jewish-Christian religious way of thinking the symbolism of divine light plays an important role. Sometimes the description of the

divine as light may be just metaphorical (Mensing 1957, p. 429 f.). However, we also find designations of the divine as light which cannot be interpreted as metaphors and are apparently inspired by the Oriental deification of light.

In an article on the symbolism of light Mensching (1957) makes a distinction between symbols and allegories. The statement of Jesus: "I am the light of the world" is a metaphor. In the dualistic Gnosis, however, the light is not symbolic. The deity is light, is a substance called light. The Christian ideas about light (light and life, light and truth) are interpreted as metaphors by Mensching, who, however, also observes that Christian mystics like Hildegard von Bingen and Mechthild von Magdeburg had experiences of superterrestrial light. I think that the symbolism of light as well as the identification of light and the divine in Gnosis and mysticism may have had oriental roots.

After these general remarks on the history of ideas concerning light and its opposition to darkness, I want to make a digression on the principle of oppositions like light and darkness and the connection with the ethical-philosophical dualism.

Light and darkness as an opposition

In the case of twin concepts it is important to discover the system of values to which they belong. E. g. the opposition of hot and cold is mostly based on practical experience and the positive and negative associations depend on the situation in which the opposition plays a role, though some religions attribute absolute connotations of value to these concepts. Light and darkness generally have religious background and are not value-free.

A couple may refer to two complementary entities like man and woman, but it may also express a complete antithesis and enmity. In such a black-and-white antithesis the value judgement depends on the party to which one belongs. In the Western movement of women's liberation the complementary couple of man and woman is transformed into an opposition and antithesis, and men, in ancient

periods unduly glorified as gods on earth, are turned into devils. Good and evil are not purely ethical categories in this case. In these antitheses there are defectors, intermediaries and even reversals: good may become evil and vice versa. In the opposition of man and woman the external characteristics are quite clear. In politics such an opposition is rather elusive. Nevertheless all over the world an opposition between right and left, between conservative and progressive is assumed, since one prefers to think in terms of antitheses. The positive and negative connotations depend on the party to which one belongs or with which one sympathizes. President Reagan used to call the Soviet Union the realm of the devil a few years ago. Nowadays Mr. Gorbachow, who then was a devil of lower rank, is glorified by many Europeans as some sort of saviour of the world. Sometimes politics look like mythology. I will revert to this point in my discussion of the powers of light and darkness in the Veda.

The couple of light and darkness as such has a clear, natural background in the form of night and day, but this opposition is not value-free in most cultures. Night has a negative connotation. It implies concealment and obstruction of activities. The sun is hidden by the night. Day symbolizes activity, night inertia and regression. Light is life, darkness is death.

There are more, similar oppositions and the system of binary oppositions has been explained by some scholars as based on a socio-political background. The two moieties (halves) of the clans of Red-Indians in South-America are connected with a dualistic way of thinking by structuralists in anthropology. This social background is missing with the Ancient Persians (Colpe 1982, p. 328) as well as with the Ancient Indians (Gonda 1974, p. 31 f.). However, a general form of dualistic thinking is widely spread, as appears from the distinction between right and left in politics.

This general dualism may be based on two data: evident pairs like man and woman, night and day, as well as the wish to get grip on manifoldness and diversity. The opposition of light and darkness

on the hand is directly connected with the evident couple of night and day. On the other hand it also excellently suits the dualistic pattern of thinking in which two parties play a role: black and white. Light and white have a positive connotation. Black and dark just form the opposite party.

Light and darkness and the ethical-philosophical dualism

In the ethical-philosophical dualism two independent powers of good and evil are opposed, the one connected with light, the other with darkness. These powers are responsible for good and evil in this world. This opposition is also associated with spirit and matter, body and soul.

Often this dualism has been explained as a theodicy, as a justification of God in a world full of evil and injustice. See e. g. Runciman (1984, p. 171) in his book on the Medieval Manichee. It should be observed, however, that such a theodicy applies to monotheism rather than to polytheism. Moreover it may explain the origin of the opposition of good and evil, but it leaves unexplained the relation with light and darkness.

One may ask whether it is possible to arrive at an ethical-philosophical dualism directly from a rather vague positive-negative opposition of light and darkness. A theodicy is some sort of philosophical rationalisation. It is doubtful whether the dualism of good and light on the one side and of evil and darkness on the other side originally was such a creative conception of a single great mind. In a paper on Zarathustra Rudolph (1970, p. 305) ascribes this dualism as a theodicy to one man, Zarathustra. Runciman states: "Its birth lies far back in the days when man first consciously looked at the world and saw it was bad; and he wondered how such evil should be, and why God, if there was a god, should permit it" (...) "It is a desire to solve the problem of Evil that lies at the base of Gnosticism" (o. c., p. 5).

I suppose that mythology preceded philosophy and that the ultimate roots of a dualism which is connected with light and dark-

ness should be looked for in early mythology. However, it is also possible that the fully developed ethical-philosophical dualism of good and evil, of light and darkness and of spirit and matter is the final product of the fusion of several oppositions. Here I may refer to Colpe (1982, p. 329) who assumes that the original value-free opposition of light and darkness only gradually became associated with good and evil. I doubt, however, whether light and darkness really were value-free.

The powers of light and darkness in Ancient India

In Vedic mythology the strife of the Devas and the Asuras is a continuously repeated item. The word *deva* means god and the most convincing etymology of *asura* is that it should mean lord. A dualism of gods and lords looks strange. The meaning of the two words already indicates that they do not refer to good versus evil in terms of ethics. Two parties are involved and the Devas form the party of the Aryans in identifications and consequently they are the good party. Ultimately, as is well-known, the word *asura* was analysed as *a-sura* ("non-Sura") and thus the Devas were called Suras. Transposed into modern times this would mean that from the Marxist point of view the Americans should become A-mericans ("non-Mericans") and the Soviets real Mericans. The parallelism shows that ethical dualism hardly plays a role in such binary oppositions.

For our subject of light and darkness it is interesting to observe that the Devas are connected with light. This appears from the text and also from the etymology of the word *deva*, which is associated with heaven and heavenly light, day and daylight. Their antagonists, the Asuras, belong to darkness, but here a supporting etymology is missing. The opposition of Devas and Asuras, light and darkness, is based on their roles in mythology. The Asuras are the elder powers, the Devas the younger. Sometimes the Asuras are called the elder brothers.

This opposition of the older and the younger party in Vedic mythology has been variously explained. It is undeniable that in

later texts the opposition is clear than in the oldest text (the RV., especially its oldest layers) and that in the RV. the singular form *Asura* is much more positively used than the plural form *Asuras* in the late Vedic texts. Therefore some scholars have assumed a shift in the religious worship of the Vedic Aryans. A historical evolution (the deterioration of the position of the Asuras) would have been reflected in mythology. Other groups of worshippers, other religious communities, would have risen in power. Sometimes even non-Aryans or pre-Vedic Aryans or an acculturation of non-Aryans and pre-Vedic Aryans (Parpola 1988) are associated with the Asuras. For a survey of opinions on the Asuras I may refer to Hale (1985). Though this theory has adherents even in recent times, the evolutionistic aspect of this interpretation reminds one of the evolutionistic approach of the nineteenth century (an argument which may be used by critics who do not have an open mind for other theories than their own). Moreover, the reflection of socio-political situations and changes in myths and religious conceptions is a theory which nowadays is not favoured by several scholars.

As far as the theme of the elder brothers and the younger brothers is concerned, in which the younger represent the good party, we may refer to parallels which do not admit of a historical explanation. The Bogomils, a dualistic sect on the Balcan which may have influenced the Medieval Cathars in Western Europe, believed that Satan was the first born son of God and Christ the second. Iranian influence has been assumed here, since Ahriman, the evil power and the antagonist of Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda), is likewise the eldest son of Zervan (Eliade 1965, p. 83 f.). Therefore the Asuras may have been called the elder sons of Prajāpati and no reference to an older worship of the Asuras has to be assumed.

Now it is remarkable that in Persia the Devas (there called *Daēvas*) became the bad party. The positive power is called *Ahura Mazda* ("the wise Lord"), later called *Ohrmazd*, whose antagonist is *Ahriman* in the dualistic system. Persian *Ahura* is Vedic *Asura*. It is true that a group of *Ahuras* as a counterpart of a group of *Asuras* is missing, but the *Ahura-Daēva* opposition is quite evident,

In some Iranian texts we even find a double terminology for Ahuric and Daēvic entities (Colpe 1982, p. 329), e. g. son is *puθra* (Ahuric) as well as *hunav* (Daēvic). In this dualism the original powers of light (as far as the etymology is concerned), the Daēvas, form the party of the antagonists or demons. In early Iranian literature good and evil are not emphatically associated with light and darkness. It would have been strange to connect the originally heavenly Daēvas with darkness. This association later became more prominent. Probably the Iranian reversal has to be attributed to the religious reformer Zarathustra. The fact that such a reversal could take place already is an indication that the Aryan Asuras were not purely evil even in the Vedic context. The dualism is an opposition of two parties.

The rivalry of Devas and Asuras, which is also described in post-Vedic literature (with other names), makes a structural rather than an ethical impression. I quote O'Flaherty (1976, p. 64): "The opposition between the gods and demons is purely structural; they are alike in all ways except that, by definition, they are opposed. The two groups are functionally but not essentially opposed, in conflict over the acquisition of power (...) This opposition is so basic and so necessary to the myths that the gratified structuralist coming upon them might almost suppose that the ancient Indians had read Lévi-Strauss and constructed the category of demons precisely in order to provide a structural counterpart of the gods, this being their total *raison d'être* in Hinduism". Of course, there is some exaggeration in this conclusion and it does not primarily refer to the oldest Vedic situation, but I think that it also contains some truth. There is no theodicy but a rivalry of parties and a mythology. This also appears from the connection made between the mythological level and the situation on earth. The gods of light, the Devas, are associated with the Aryans who invaded the subcontinent, that is to say with the own party. The enemies are identified with the Asuras (though there is no indication that Asura and non-Aryan coincide). In this black-and-white relationship (also marked with these two colours) white does not necessarily denote the white skin

of the Aryans. It is also the colour of one of the two parties in games.

The association of Aryans and the party of the Devas with light is undeniable. I refer to some places in the *Ṛgvedasamhitā*. The sun is called the Aryan light (10, 43, 4). The dawns give broad light to the Aryans (1, 117, 21). The leader of the Devas, sometimes also functioning as the god of war of the Aryans, "revealed the light for the Aryans" (2, 11, 18). The god of fire and light, Agni, drove the enemies out of their countries and created broad light for the Aryans (7, 5, 6). "The high, radiant (light) ... which is truth and is fixed at the bottom of heaven, which kills the enemies, which kills Vṛtra (the demon of darkness), which killed the Asuras, which kills the rivals, that light is born now" (10, 170, 2).

Light and darkness in the Vedic cosmogonic myth

In the beginning there was no difference between night and day, between the upper and the nether world. This lack of differentiation is sometimes designated as darkness in the absence of other forms of expression. "There was darkness in the beginning, concealed by darkness" says *Ṛv.* 10, 129, 3. Genesis 1, 2 in the Bible states: "The earth was desolate and empty. Darkness lay over the depth the spirit of God floated over the waters". Out of this darkness light and the cosmos arise. In the Vedic myth the differentiation (i. e. the dualism of light and darkness, heaven and nether world) is produced by Indra, the leader of the Devas. His adversary, the demon Vṛtra ("resistance" as well as "concealment"), represented as a snake or dragon, keeps the positive elements of the future cosmos such as light concealed.

The opposition of Indra and Vṛtra is replaced by Devas and Asuras in the Vedic texts, but we also find intermediate combinations such as Indra and Devas versus Vṛtra and Indra versus the Asuras. The Asuras are connected with primeval chaos and darkness. When the dualism of light and darkness as well as of upper world and nether world appears, the Asuras recede in the darkness (i. e. the nether world, especially around the end of the year, when light has

again to be won and the cosmogonic myth has to become re-enacted in rituals probably characterized by rivalry. Here I summarize Kuiper's ideas on Vedic cosmogony (Kuiper 1983), which I support, though many questions are left open and much is hypothetical. On recurrence, return, new year and cosmogony I may also refer to Eliade (1949).

This mythological background of the relation between light and darkness determines the Vedic ideas about light. Light and darkness do not only form an opposition. It is also important that light appears out of darkness. In the dualism of light and darkness this darkness is the successor of the concealing and resisting forces of the primeval situation and therefore is negative, whereas light is positive. The cosmogonic myth does not only live on in the ever repeated rituals, but also in the ideas on life and death, body and soul, and release from mundane existence.

The image of light

Just as light arises from darkness, life arises from death or from the darkness of the womb. Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa states: "The womb is blind darkness as it were" (3, 9, 2). Similarly insight and vision arise from the darkness of ignorance. The light of vision is hidden. "These authors, indeed, not rarely alluded to an internal light which is in the heart. In 3, 26, 8 it reads "Im Herzen den Weg zu dem Gedanken, zum Licht findend" (tr. Geldner) ["Finding the path to thought, to the light, in the heart"] (...) that is the 'light' of inspired thought and vision or supranormal insight" (Gonda 1963, p. 272). The concept of ignorance in the Sāṃkhya philosophy is denoted as darkness (*tamas*). The heart encloses the light of knowledge or mystic inspiration and the womb the light of life, just as the primeval cosmic hill of Vṛtra the light of the sun before cosmogony.

Here one might assume metaphorical language, but there are indications that the light in the heart and in the womb is more than a metaphor or even a continuation of mythological ideas. The seed in man (i. e. life or light ultimately to be produced out of darkness)

is regarded as light belonging to the sun. Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa 3, 10, 4 observes: "When the father emits him as seed in the womb, then the sun emits him as seed in the womb" and Aitareya Āraṇyaka 2, 3, 7 even states that the seed in man is a manifestation of Āditya, of the sun. In an article on spirit, light and seed Eliade (1971, p. 8) concludes: "The idea of co-substantiality of (divine) spirit, light and *semen virile* is certainly Indo-Iranian and may be even more archaic". This identification of seed and cosmic, divine light is also found in Manichaeism (Eliade 1971, p. 10). The sun places life in man. Ultimately this life which is light has to return to the sun. Life and soul are just as the seed represented as light. When this light of the soul leaves the body, this body is interpreted as darkness. Light and soul then form an opposition to darkness and body and this darkness is associated with evil. Let me quote Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4, 3, 7-8:

"When, O Yājñavalkya, the sun has set, when the moon has set (...) what light does this person have then? — The soul (or: the self, the *ātman*) is then his light. — What is that soul? — The person (*puruṣa*) who as consciousness manifests himself among the senses, the internal light in the heart (...) This person (or: soul) comes into contact with evil, when he is to be born and enters the body. When he escapes from the body at death, he leaves evil behind".

Nobody will interpret this internal light as the metaphor of a poet. Another quotation from the Upaniṣads (Kāṭha Upaniṣad 5, 11-15) again illustrates the ideas about the internal light:

"Just as the sun, the eye in the whole universe, is not defiled by defects outside itself which it sees with that eye, so the one inner soul living in all beings is not defiled by the evil in the world, for it is external to itself. (...) How should one conceive it? Does it shine or is it the reflection (of something else)" — There (in the self) the sun does not shine, nor the moon, nor do lightnings flash, let alone the earthly fire. Everything shines here through its shining. The universe is illumined through its illumination".

So the soul is part of the supreme light and forms an opposition to body and matter regarded as evil. The parallelism with the Manichaeism of light and darkness, good and evil, spirit and matter, in which the soul is imprisoned in the body as a divine spark, is striking. The quoted texts, however, are relatively late Vedic texts and they do not necessarily represent common Indo-Iranian views. The direct relation of these texts to Manichaeism is not quite clear. At any case there is no negative power or Satan who is responsible for the evil of the world in these Upaniṣads.

The antithesis of truth and falsity is associated with light and darkness. Repeatedly the sun is regarded as truth. On the one hand this concept of truth sometimes was more or less identical with cosmic order, on the other hand it may also refer to justice. In this opposition the two conflicting parties, the Devas and the Asuras, play a role. The Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā (9, 11) observes: "He (the Creator Prajāpati) created the gods with (or through) truth. They became truth. He created the Asuras with (or through) untruth. They became untruth". Still, the concept of truth or cosmic order (Ṛta) is less exclusively connected with the Devas than might be expected. The outstanding Asura, who for that matter later on seems to have deserted to the party of the Devas, has a special relation with the Ṛta (just as his possible Iranian counterpart Ahura Mazdā has with the Aša). By way of explanation it may be observed that Indra and Devas are connected with the aggressive and innovating aspect of cosmogony, whereas the cosmic order or truth forms a more static concept.

In the Vedic myth the Creator, Prajāpati, creates two powers: the Devas, connected with light and the winning of light, and the Asuras, connected with darkness and the obstruction of light. In a late Vedic text, the Praśna Upaniṣad (1, 4-10), the Devas (=light) and the Asuras (=darkness) are replaced by life or soul (=light) and matter (=darkness):

"Prajāpati desired offspring. He practised asceticism. After having practised asceticism he emitted a couple, namely matter and

life. (...) Forsooth, the sun is life, the moon matter" (1, 4-5). "Prajāpati is the year. This contains two courses (of the sun), the southern and the northern. They who dedicate themselves to sacrifices and meritorious works only obtain the moon (as their final station on the way to heaven and immortality). They return to earth. Therefore those who want to obtain offspring follow the southern course. This, the course of the Fathers, is matter. But they who have searched for the Ātman through asceticism (...) knowledge and wisdom go along the northern course (i.e. the light half of the year) to the sun. This is the seat of the life (...) From there they do not return on earth".

So we see that light in association with truth, goodness, the divine sphere, life, spirit and soul remains connected with the opposition of light and darkness as formulated in the oldest myths. The two conflicting parties, the Devas and the Asuras, are replaced by other entities. Several elements and aspects of an ethical-philosophical dualism are demonstrable, but a dualistic system of a good and evil that may serve as a theodicy and that supposes a power responsible for the evil of the world, did not develop in India. This is the difference with Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. Some interesting, incidental parallels provoke our curiosity rather than provide a sound proof of borrowing or development from a common source.

LECTURE II

ANCIENT INDIAN VISIONARY LITERATURE

Introduction

The visionary literature of Ancient India (i. e. of the Vedic period) is rather limited. However, it contains a few striking parallels with European visionary literature, which will be discussed here. Parallels require an explanation. In some cases borrowing from the common Indo-Iranian tradition (which does not imply directly from India) may be assumed. Some motifs in the so-called literary visions (i. e. elaborate descriptions of a journey to heaven or hell not based on the actual experience of a particular human being) may have travelled through Persia to Europe. On the other hand visionary experiences may explain the agreements, since these are to some extent similar all over the world. Those similarities are based on the use of similar techniques and means in the preparation of visionary experiences like fasting, drugs, techniques of concentration etc. Some people assume a common element in the subconscious of everybody. I leave undiscussed here the religious implications.

The current phenomenon of light in visionary literature ultimately is to be explained as due to common experiences in my opinion. As a literary motif it was also spread and played a role in borrowing from the one text to the other, from the one culture to the other. Mostly, however, the distinction between literary visionary texts and visionary literature based on actual experiences is rather vague.

Phenomena like mystic experiences and visions are sometimes mixed up and sometimes strictly distinguished in scholarly literature. Some scholars dealing with mysticism as well as some mystics have made very negative statements on visions. In his *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (1957) R. C. Zaehner observed that mysticism has nothing to do with supernatural phenomena like visions "which

may be experienced by saint and sinner alike" (p. 32). He also states: "Praeternatural phenomena that may or may not accompany it are subsidiary, accidental, parasitic". At best he is ready to admit that some serious mystics "have been subject to these disturbances". The more they actually see (i. e. have visions) the less they are taken seriously by Zaehner.

On the other hand another specialist of mysticism, Underhill, so much stretches the definition of vision that the distinction with mysticism becomes blurred.

According to the German Mediaevist Dinzelbacher, who wrote a book on visions and visionary literature in the European Middle Ages (1981), the visionary experiences should be directed towards something outside man, i. e. the soul sees something which is found elsewhere. This definition especially applies to the literary visions. It is clear, however, that definition of vision as well as its demarcation from mysticism is problematic.

Visionary elements in Vedic literature

Though from its earliest period India has known a continuous tradition of attempts "to transcend the empirical level which is based on the conviction that the truth of life and experience is necessarily transcendent" (Gonda, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, p. 18), still actual reports of experienced visions are extremely rare, even if we stretch the definition of the concept of vision. As Zaehner remarked (*Mysticism*, p. 130), the Hindu mystical classics "are not autobiographical and are not the record of actual experiences undergone by individuals". It is not accidental that the only book on Ancient Indian visionary literature that is known to me (Scherman 1892) is confined to descents into hell. It may be true that Zaehner perhaps was too strict in his denial of authentic experiences behind texts with visionary aspects and that Scherman may have had a perverse predilection for the cruel descriptions of hell and therefore may have overlooked the other aspects of visionary literature. Still there is some truth in conclusion that authentic records of visionary experiences are hardly found in the Veda. An explanation is missing.

In later times we find more material (e. g. in Bhakti texts). In modern times Ramakrishna is reported to have had several visions. In the post-Vedic period description of heaven (the so-called literary visions) are paralleled by representations in art. For Buddhist art I may refer to Dr. van Kooy's article "Indra's Heaven in Buddhist Art" which appeared in 1989 in Delhi, from which I quote: "It is well known that visions formed an essential part in the meditation of the Buddhist monk or *yogin* from the time of early Buddhism onwards. The visionary meditations of the Buddhist *sādhaka* may be regarded as a last stage, at least in India itself, of a continuous tradition of visions starting with the Buddha and the monk Maudgalyāyana. There are frequent references of a visionary ascension to heaven, where the divine beings present themselves in their full glory. (...) This heavenly scenery is always indicated in one form or another, both in literature and in art" (p. 97). What information does Vedic literature provide?

The visionary poetry of the *Rgvedasamhitā*

The *Rgvedic* poetry hardly shows traces of visions as described in other literatures. Still the poets are called seers, i. e. visionaries. I quote in translation the German translator Karl Geldner: "Seer is called in the Veda the one who sees the mysterious, divine things with the inner eye" (p. 2 of the first volume). This qualification of the Vedic poet may be compared with the definition of vision given by Bertholet's dictionary of religions (p. 587), in which vision is denoted as a sight perceived by man in his capacity as seer and perceived with a mental eye. This vision, says Bertholet, may have the character of imagination or hallucination. It may refer to something which is far away or even to the future. Ultimately it may be the divine revelation of something which no eye has ever seen.

Trying to apply this definition (freely quoted in translation) to the Veda we have to take into account that a divine origin is claimed for this text, that according to tradition its contents have been revealed to seers and that these poets described their inspiration as seeing, as vision, as seeing with the inner eye. When on the other

hand we read this text, its actual contents do not look as visionary as one might expect on account of visionary literature outside India.

On the inspiration of the seer-poets, which should not be confused with profane, poetic inspiration, much material is available in the Veda itself. In his book *The Vision of the Vedic Poets* Gonda calls this inspiration vision. The relevant Sanskrit words concerning this inspiration like *dhī*, *dhīti* and *dhyanā* can be derived from a root which besides thinking also means perceiving. Gonda defines vision in the Veda as "the exceptional and supranormal faculty, proper to 'seers', of 'seeing', in the mind, things, causes, connections as they really are, the faculty of acquiring a sudden knowledge of the truth, of the functions and influences of the divine powers, of man's relations to them etc. etc." (pp. 68-69). Here it becomes clear that the English term 'vision' has several shades of meaning. This definition of vision does not refer to the concrete contents (as in the usual visionary literature), but to the activity of seeing, or, as Gonda puts it, to the faculty of seeing.

This vision of the Vedic seers does not refer to the well-known topics like the throne of god, flowers, light etc. Since this vision does not result in records of actual experiences, one might call it inspiratory experience (a term translated from Heiler's "Inspirationserlebnis", see Heiler 1961, p. 552). The Vedic seers mostly talk about their vision = inspiration rather than giving records of visionary experiences, as may be expected in a collection of hymns in praise of deities and their actions.

On the other hand the titles of these seers seem to point to a state of mind which is not found with ordinary people, not even with poets. They are called *ṛṣis* (according to its etymology "furious, raging people") as well as *vīpras* ("vibrating, trembling, excited people").

In this connection it may be observed that the Soma taken by the poet priests may have played a role in creating this impression of being utterly excited and trembling, provided that Soma was

hallucinogenic (a point still under debate). This Soma might even have produced visions as found in the current visionary literature, i. e. praeternatural sights rather than the faculty of seeing cosmic truths.

One entire hymn (the Laba-sūkta, RV. 10, 119) is dedicated to the effects of Soma. There has been much discussion on this hymn, but in my view the poet describes himself as greater than heaven and earth, a qualification of the own situation also found elsewhere in the literature of mystics as well as in the reports of people using drugs. A similar utterance is found in RV. 10, 136, in which an ecstatic is described. He is not a poet-priest and does not use Soma. Still he bears heaven and earth within himself. Here the mystic experience evidently has been produced by the poison (*viṣa*) which he also bears inside himself, i. e. by some sort of drug or narcotic drink. The cosmification of the orthodox Soma-drinker in the Labasūkta as well as of the unorthodox long-haired Muni in 10, 135 may be compared with Upaniṣadic conceptions in which reaching totality, the All, the Universe, and becoming one with this All is described as becoming released from the earthly existence as an individual.

In the non-religious, natural mysticism and in experiments with drugs this all-in-one experience (the so-called pan-en-ism, as Zaehner p. 118 calls it) also plays a role. The agreement between the long-haired, drugged ecstatic and the Soma-drinking poet-priest implies that the latter also may have experienced hallucinations which are current with ecstasies.

The ecstatic long-haired obviously is some sort of shaman. He flies or thinks to fly through the air. This ecstasis, this leaving of the body, has as its opposition the enstasis, the Yogic interiorisation in which one turns to the interior of oneself (see Eliade 1951, p. 374). Even in late Vedic texts we still see traces of the departure of the soul from the body in connection with conceptions of the soul. However, it is not to be excluded that the roots of the more developed enstasis are already to be found in the oldest text, the RV.

A reference to a visionary experience effected by soma is perhaps to be traced in RV. 8, 48 : "We have drunk Soma, we have become immortal. We have reached the light. We have found the gods" (verse 3). Reaching the light is typical of visionary literature. Elsewhere (RV. 1, 139, 2) two gods, Mitra and Varuṇa, are described as sitting on a throne. Such a throne is again a well known item in visionary activities. Gonda (*Vision*, p. 69) translates here "with our power of vision". The author sees this with his mind and with his own eyes, so the text says, i. e. he sees this with the eye of the mind. Here we are reminded of the quoted definition of vision put forward by Bertholet. The author states that he sees with Soma's own eyes, i. e. that he sees it in a visionary experience produced by the use of Soma. One may also compare RV. 9, 107, 14, where the drops of Soma are said to find the light of heaven and the sun. This means that the poet-priest who drinks Soma will find the light of the sun in a visionary experience.

Here we touch upon an important element of Vedic mysticism : the discovery of the sun which is hidden during the night in the nether world, which is also the primordial world, the world-ocean, the primeval waters below the earth, or perhaps inside the world conceived as the cosmic, primordial hill. Finding the sun consequently means mentally penetrating into the nether world, which is not hell, but the primeval world. In this world god Varuṇa resides, the Lord (*Asura*) who is the god of the primeval waters as well as the guardian of cosmic Order or Truth (the *Ṛta*). To this god Varuṇa is dedicated RV. 7, 88, one of the few visionary hymns of the RV., from which I quote in translation the verses 2-5 :

"I who have seen him, consider the face of Agni [i. e. the god of fire, sun and light] to be that of Varuṇa. May the ruler [i. e. Varuṇa] lead me to darkness in order to see the sun in the rock [i. e. in the cavity of the primordial hill], the mysterious sight. When both of us, Taruṇa and I, mount the ship, when we set course for the middle of the ocean [i. e. the subterranean, primeval waters], when we sail over the back of the water, we shall play on the swings for the sake of splendour [i. e. the author of the hymn] in the ship.

He, the artist, has made him a seer (*ṛṣi*) through his powers. He who is an inspired poet (*vipra*) (or : mystic ?) himself has made him an inspired poet in view of happiness which would last all days and dawns. Where have these ties of friendship between us disappeared ? For we used to be together as friends and nothing endangered this friendship. O sovereign Varuṇa, I entered the house of thousand gates, your house ”.

Obviously Varuṇa had once initiated the poet of this hymn into the cosmic mystery of the sun in the rock, in the subterranean water, and thereby made him a seer. I may refer here to Kuiper's article "The Bliss of Aśa", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 8 (1964), pp. 96-129 (especially pp. 110-114). In my opinion Vasiṣṭha's complaint refers to the absence of a renewed visionary experience. Such complaints are well-known in literature on visions and mysticism.

Avestan Parallels

Comparable ideas about younder world are found in Ancient Persia, where Ahura Mazdā and Zarathustra probably form the counterparts of Varuṇa and Vasiṣṭha. Similarly Vedic Rta and Avestan Aśa should be equated. This Aśa is also placed in younder world which is said to contain the sun. Ahura Mazdā confers the bliss of Aśa which manifests itself together with light. This bliss is the union of the soul with Aśa. The effects of the Haoma drink (= Vedic Soma) are also described as associated with bliss and Aśa. For all this I again refer to Kuiper's mentioned article.

The more concrete aim of the Vedic *ṛṣi* is to see the sun itself in the world of Rta, whereas Zarathustra wants to have a vision of Aśa. "Show me your Aśa". "O, beautiful Aśa, we shall see you". "O, Aśa, when shall I see you ?" Kuiper is right in assuming here a common Indo-Iranian mysticism.

These concrete visions evidently lie outside this world. The seer transports himself in mind to younder world. Perhaps his mind or soul are regarded to leave the body temporarily in order to have a preview of eternal bliss after death.

The sun in the heart

The sun hidden in or under the earth (= the cosmic hill) has a microcosmic parallel in the RV. The soul, the visionary insights, the inspiration, lie hidden in the heart, the seat of soul and thinking. The heart is the organ with which one can see what cannot be seen with the eye (see Gonda, *Vision*, p. 276). With the heart one penetrates into mysteries and inside the heart the visionary inspiration becomes concretized. The search for the hidden sun (i. e. the mystery of the sun in the rock) and the search for the light of visionary inspiration are mixed up in the language of the Vedic poets.

The author of RV 10, 177 e. g. states that with their hearts (or : in their hearts) and with their minds the inspired seers see the bird which has become manifest through the inscrutable power of the Asura (Varuṇa ?). This mysterious bird is interpreted by Geldner as the inner light of visionary insight and illumination in the heart. Elsewhere, however, the bird denotes the sun. The poet of 10, 177 continues : "The seers see him in the ocean. The wise man look for the trace of the rays of the sun". Ocean and heart are here identical according to Gonda (*Vision*, p. 281). Kuiper (1964, p. 125) rightly explains this as an equation of the heart with the cosmic mountain which contains inside itself the primeval waters (the ocean). The interior light and the sun (hidden by the heart, respectively the mountain) are likewise identified. Both should come out of darkness or be seen in darkness.

Now one might interpret this metaphorically. The rise of poetic inspiration then would be expressed as the rise of the sun. Such an explanation is not satisfactory. One should bear in mind that the whole terminology refers to a cosmic mystery rather than to a simple sunrise. This cosmic mystery is the mystery of the hidden sun which can only be discovered by the inspired, visionary seer. The sun itself is the object of his vision. The nocturnal sun is identical with, and described as, the sun in the primordial situation before cosmogony. Moreover, light is prominent in visionary and mystic

experiences and not just a poetic image. The fact that in religious writings often the image of light is used should not induce us also to interpret the light of mystic experience metaphorically.

In later Vedic literature the sun in the heart again appears and then denotes the immortal part of man, his soul. Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad 6, 34 identifies the bird in the heart with the bird in the sun. There is no reference to poetical inspiration in that context. Here the soul (the *ātman*) is identified with the highest cosmic principle, still concretized as the sun.

We also read in Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1, 14 that this soul (*ātman*) is placed or hidden in a cave, a place in which the highest deity or World-soul (*Puruṣa*) is localized. Again I refer to Kuiper's mentioned paper (Kuiper 1964, pp. 124-125) as well as to my own treatment of the first chapter of this Upaniṣad (Bodewitz 1985, p. 11). On account of the similarity with the sun hidden in the rock of the RV. Kuiper here assumes a direct continuation of ancient Vedic mystic speculation and Vedic practices of meditation.

Indeed, there seem to be starting-points in the RV. for the contemplation of the immortal part of man as sun or light. The sun hidden in the cave of the heart can be explained within the framework of Vedic mythology and world view. The identification of soul and sun easily fits into the (later) Vedic pattern of macrocosmic-microcosmic identifications.

On the other hand one should take into account that outside India visionary and mystic experiences are also associated with light and sun. This phenomenon has been extensively treated in literature. Apart from Gonda's book on the vision of the Vedic *ṛsis* I may especially refer to Mircea Eliade's publications, e. g. *The One and the Two* (1965), in which he dedicates a chapter to "Experiences of the Mystic Light" (pp. 19-77). I quote: "... pure being, the ultimate reality, can be known particularly through an experience of the pure Light; the process of the cosmic revelation consists of a series of luminous manifestations, and cosmic reabsor-

ption repeats the manifestations of these differently coloured lights" (...). "... the most adequate revelation of divinity is effected by the light". According to Eliade this experience of light is "Yogic", i. e. the effect of an experimental realisation of the transcendent.

Now it is striking that this light often is specified as the sun by mystics. Heiler (1961, p. 55) observes that the sun is the image of the soul with mystics and in this connection he refers to European mystics like Mechthild von Magdeburg and Heinrich Seuse (Suso), quoting the latter's statement: "Die Sonne ruhet in der Seele Grund" (The sun resides in the bottom of the soul). We have observed that in Vedic India the heart is the seat of the soul. It is remarkable that also in the European Middle Ages we find the heart as the centre of the individual and its connection with the sun (Dinzelbacher 1961, p. 262). The conception of the sun in the heart is perhaps too specific to be interpreted as based on universal experiences of visionaries. Already in early Christianity the sun is conceived as the symbol of the divine, the eternal and righteousness. This may be the origin of the European concept of the sun as the divine soul in man. Oriental influence (perhaps even Aryan influence) may be assumed here, though the lines of borrowing are uncertain.

Ascent to the throne of the sun in heaven

The heavenly throne as the goal of the soul's journey to heaven forms a current item in visionary literature. Sometimes this belongs to the so-called literary visions, i. e. to product of religiously inspired imagination rather than to the sphere of actual visionary experiences. On the other hand the description of the final destination of these ascents to heaven often cannot be distinguished from the records of visionaries. Now it is interesting that in a Vedic description of such an ascent to heaven of the soul (transmitted in Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads) the sun again plays a role, in one version even in connection with a throne. I refer here to the beginning of the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad (Thieme 1951, pp. 19-36) and to some chapters in the

beginning of the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa (Bodewitz 1973, pp. 52–61). One particular aspect of this journey of the soul is that ultimately, the soul of the deceased is identified with the highest entity, which is the sun in the Brāhmaṇa and god Brahmā in the version of the Upaniṣad. In the latter version the soul reaches the throne of god Brahmā, but in later layers of this text the impersonal Brahman, the Absolute, rather than god Brahmā seems to form the final destination. The soul does not reach the throne of Brahmā then, but becomes absorbed in Brahman and identified with Brahman. So we see a development from the sun in the interior of man to the identification of the soul (Ātman) and the Absolute (Brahman). This identification is realized after death and after a rather mythical journey to heaven. Other Upaniṣads make this ascent to heaven superfluous. The identification of Ātman and Brahman may be strived for already during lifetime.

Knowledge of the identity of soul and highest principle rather than good conduct qualifies for entrance to the heavenly throne. There is some sort of initiation. Journey to heaven and *unio mystica* belong together. In the parallel versions of this ascent to heaven the deceased or the soul is tested by the highest being in heaven and by his doorkeepers. Essential is the correct answer to the question: "Who are you?" By mentioning one's name one shows to be too much tied to one's own identity and body (i. e. personality). The divine origin of man is stressed.

Before the concluding discussion with the highest deity or the initiation takes place, we find in the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad an elaborate description of the journey from the gate of heaven to the palace and throne of god Brahmā, which shows parallels with heavenly journeys in Zoroastrian literature. The Zoroastrian parallels may be connected with Manichaeism. From Manichaeism influence on Christian conceptions is possible.

Let us see what is relevant in this connection. The deceased has to cross a lake and later also a river. In general this is the point where the good and the evil people become separated and selected in

visionary texts. Mostly one tries to cross by way of a bridge or causeway which is so narrow that the rejected people fall down into hell or are drowned. The bridge may be as narrow or thin as a knife or sword. The most well-known example is to be found in Iranian literature, the so called Činvat bridge, i. a. occurring in the vision of Ardā Virāz, a vision which according to tradition was produced after the use of alcohol and drugs. It is, however, also found in older Iranian literature. The vision of Ardā Virāz shows that the distinction between actual records of visions and literary visions (e. g. descriptions of the ascent to heaven of the deceased) is vague.

Though the motif of the bridge to be crossed is widely spread (Heiler 1951, p. 357 and 421), scholars have assumed borrowing of this motif of the Činvat bridge from Persia by way of the Jewish and Arabic tradition to Christianity (Widengren 1969, p. 442; Scherman 1892, p. 106 f. on Gregory of Tours). The motif occurs in eschatological texts as well as in descriptions of ascents to heaven of ecstasies. Consequently it has been interpreted as originally shamanistic, e. g. by Eliade (1951, pp. 357, 421) who connects it with Caucasian and Iranian conceptions.

The bridge is so narrow that it can be passed only by mind or soul, as Eliade observes. Explicit references to a bridge are missing in the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, but it is remarkable that the lake and the river are said to be crossed "with the mind, in thought, mentally" just as the bridge in the mentioned parallel.

Those who have passed these obstacles are received by innumerable nymphs with garlands, clothes and perfumeries. Here one is reminded of Zoroastrian (Scherman 1892, p. 120) and Manichaean (Widengren 1961, p. 66) descriptions in which the soul of the dead is equipped with the paraphernalia of kingship before sitting down on the heavenly throne (Widengren 1969, p. 483 ff.) The correspondence between the Upaniṣad and the mentioned parallels outside India is not very explicit, though it becomes clear that the women in the Upaniṣad transform the soul or the deceased into an image of god Brahmā.

The meeting with women

Among the women who receive the soul are two with interesting names, whose interpretation, however, is not quite certain. The one is called *Mānasā* ("Lady Mind"), the other *Cākṣuṣī* ("Lady Eye"). As a unity in duality they seem to represent the mental eye, the vision of the Vedic poet through which he is able to see what nobody has ever seen. I refer here to the definition of vision given above. These two women are also said to weave the worlds; i. e. they produce the mental and visual conception of the world. The woman called *Mānasī* is *priyā*, i. e. "dear" or perhaps even "own". This means that the deceased meets his own soul in the form of a beautiful woman. H. - P. Schmidt (1975, p. 22) rightly connects this woman with the woman who receives the soul in the Zoroastrian parallels. There she is called *Daēnā*, a word which has been variously interpreted, i. e. as "the religious vision" and as "the organ through which man experiences the divine, i. e. the internal eye or vision" (Nyberg 1938, p. 114 quoted in translation). This agrees with the mentioned definition of Vedic vision as well as with the unity in duality of mind and eye represented by the two women in the Upaniṣad. The Zoroastrian conception of the encounter with the own soul in the form a woman was borrowed by Manichaeism (Widengren 1969, pp. 497-500). The woman may be either beautiful or ugly, depending on the good and ugly actions of the deceased.

In the Upaniṣad the two women are not differentiated as to their appearance. Together they represent the soul. In another visionary text from the Brāhmaṇas (found in the Śatapatha and the Jaiminīya) two women are found who may represent the good and the bad soul. I refer here to the Bhṛgu story (Bodewitz 1973, pp. 99-109). Bhṛgu is sent to yonder world, where he sees several symbolic atrocities and also two women. In the one version they guard a treasure, which obviously represents the good and bad works of man. One may assume that the two women are the good and the bad soul. The other version states that the one woman is beautiful (*kalyāṇā*) and the other *atikalyāṇā*, probably to be interpreted as "no more beautiful, ugly". In the explanation of this vision the two

women are interpreted as Faith (*śraddhā*) and Non-faith (*aśraddhā*). The beautiful woman is *śraddhā*, a term which does not only mean faith or belief but also the positive attitude towards sacrifice and their performers. She is the religious attitude of man and as such may be compared with the Old-Iranian *Daēnā*, which is not only interpreted as "mental eye" or "vision" (as observed before) but also as "religion, faith and devotion" (Molé 1960, p. 960). So one meets one's own religious enthusiasm and willingness to sacrifice, i. e. the proper religious attitude. The word *śraddhā* may even denote a particular longing for something. Just as in the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad and in the Iranian parallels the women in these Brāhmaṇa passages represent the religious attitude connected with good and bad actions. They are the positive and negative accounts of man's deeds and symbolize his soul or mental attitude.

The beautiful and the ugly woman are also found in one of the visions of the European Medieval mystic Hildegard von Bingen (Dinzelsbacher 1981, p. 173). The beautiful woman represents Christian love (desire). This parallelism has not been noticed before. The motif is rather specific and consequently borrowing from Oriental sources may be assumed.

A personification of good deeds in beautiful persons we also find in Bede's English history of church, where the vision of a seriously ill soldier is described. Two beautiful young boys bear the book of his good deeds and a horrible group of ghosts reads passages from the much larger book of the evil deeds (Scherman 1892, p. 90).

After this excursion we return to the Indian journey to heaven. Having arrived before the throne of Brahmā the deceased sits down on it. In the Upaniṣad Brahmā declares: "You are the self (*Ātman*) of all beings. What you are, that am I". In the Brāhmaṇa the sun says: "Who you are, that am I. Who I am, that are you. Come."

Conclusions

What kind of conclusions can we draw regarding Vedic visionary literature (especially the contents of the visions)?

Originally these visions refer to cosmic mysteries and man's position in relation to eternity. A unity in diversity is strived for in the form of a highest deity and a highest cosmic principle. In the RV. the impersonal highest entity is the Rta, which is associated with the sun. A deity like Varuṇa also has connections with the Rta, but in India Varuṇa did not obtain the same position as Ahura Mazdā in Iran. Coexistence in yonder world with the gods and with the sun, the symbol of eternity, is replaced as aim by the identification of the eternal element in man with its cosmic counterpart. Here mystic experiences may have played a role.

The original identification is with the sun. The abstract and impersonal cosmic principle Rta disappears after the RV. To some extent it was replaced by the Brahman, the Absolute. In the oldest Upaniṣads the microcosmic Ātman is already identified with the cosmic Brahman. On the other hand an Upaniṣad of the same period, the Kauṣītaki, still contains a description of the ascent to heaven in which the soul appears before the throne of god Brahmā. This stage of development had already been passed by other texts. The visionary mystics concentrated on the self, the Ātman, rather than on visions of heavenly thrones. Even in the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, however, the vision of god Brahmā and the identification with the impersonal Brahman almost go hand. In the oldest text, the RV., there are traces of an ancient mysticism which assumes a sun in the heart. This means that developed conceptions may be found in the oldest texts and rather mythic ideas in later texts. The general trend, however, is interiorisation and here no role is reserved for heavenly ascents as found in visionary literature.

We have also dealt with parallels from European literature. As far as borrowing may be assumed, this should start from the common Indo-Iranian tradition, from where (by way of Persia) a line of development to later Zoroastrianism and then to Manichaeism is possible. Direct influence on Manichaeism from India, though assumed by Sedlar (1980), is rather unprovable, at least as far as the non-Buddhist tradition is concerned. Still, for a comparison of

Aryan and European visionary literature the Indian branch of the Aryan culture provides interesting parallels, as was shown by the case of the two women representing the good and the evil side of the soul.

LECTURE III

VEDIC CONCEPTIONS OF THE SOUL

There has been much discussion in ethnology on the various conceptions of the soul, their interpretation, nomenclature and classification. The simple opposition of body and soul does not imply that everywhere only one concept played a role in the ideas about the soul. The problem is that within one culture there are not only several words denoting the soul. These words also refer to a rather great variety of concepts. The reason why ethnologists used the term soul for these diverging items seems to have been their preoccupation with a unitary soul-concept as found in their own culture. In the so-called primitive cultures the situation, however, is less surveyable.

Since here I will deal with the Veda, it may be useful to state beforehand that I do not consider Vedic culture on one level with primitive cultures. It is clear that the concept of *ātman*, especially in the more philosophical passages, has no relation to what we find with Red Indians and Eskimos. Still, the older portions of Vedic literature and even some Upaniṣads contain conceptions of the soul as discussed in ethnology and anthropology. My colleague from Utrecht, Dr. Bremmer, has studied the Greek conceptions of the soul (Bremmer 1983) with the help of a model used in classifying the conceptions of the soul found in primitive cultures. This model was originally drawn up by Arbman (1926), who, being an Indologist as well, also applied it on the Vedic ideas in the next year (1927). Studying Vedic culture which in several respects is as lofty as the ancient Greek, I do not follow the line of thought of Arbman and Bremmer, since I have some doubts about their classification and ordination of the concepts. In order to make clear my position it may be useful first to give a short history of scholarship concerning the Vedic as well as the primitive conceptions of the soul.

On the Vedic ideas various and conflicting views have been put forward, especially with regard to developments within the Vedic period. E. g. the Danish Indologist Tuxen (1919) observed that before the Upaniṣads there was not any notion of the soul. In an article on the ascension to heaven of the soul Paul Thieme (1952) remarked that originally the Sanskrit term *manas* denoted the soul and that later, in the Upaniṣads, the idea of a soul as something different from the body was lost in (what he called) the materialistic-monistic views of the Upaniṣads. I think that false premises and a lack of knowledge of the ethnological literature on primitive conceptions of the soul have produced this sort of confusion. One should not generalize. The material of the Vedic texts is not unequivocal. Thieme one-sidedly based himself on the earliest passages in which the doctrine of transmigration is discussed. This transmigration or *samsāra* is sometimes called "Seelenwanderung" in German, i. e. the transmigration of the souls. One may wonder, however, whether it is the soul which moves from heaven to earth and back to heaven in the passages on the *pañcāgnividyā* and the *pitṛyāna/devayāna* in the Bṛhad Āraṇyaka and Chāndogya Upaniṣads. These texts are based on an old water doctrine which deals with the circulation of life between heaven and earth in connection with fluids. The gods send water in the form of rain to the earth. The transformations of this water are food, human seed, the embryo and man, who ultimately will be cremated and then rises to heaven with the smoke of the funeral pyre out of which new rain may be produced (unless the circle is broken in the *devayāna*). In older passages, as I have shown in 1973 (p. 246) food is eaten by cows instead of man and transformed into milk, which is used in the ritual and rises to heaven with the smoke of the fire. In the ritualisation of the doctrine of reincarnation, which was also combined with the doctrine of the cycle of fertility, the soul indeed (as Thieme observes) hardly forms a separate entity. Life transmigrates in a rather concrete form.

There are, however, other passages where the existence of a soul which lives on independently from the body, is quite clear. Here the leaving of the body at death rather than the cremation of the body

plays an important role. Moreover, the Upaniṣads contain some material about the presence of one or more souls during lifetime (and even on their leaving the body temporarily).

One of the few Indologists who studied the Vedic conceptions of the soul with sufficient knowledge of all the relevant ethnological literature was the Swedish scholar Arbman mentioned earlier. Apparently his views have more influenced the ethnological than the Indological research. In Indology his publication is sometimes mentioned in a note (even with the wrong spelling of the author); sometimes it is plainly neglected. The fact that research on conceptions of the soul is a Swedish specialisation and that its publications are not accessible to everyone may have played a role. For a survey of the Swedish contributions I refer to Paulson (1954). Pupils and successors of Arbman like Paulson and Hultkrantz have made his views more accessible. However, they were specialists of religious studies, not Indologists.

In order to understand the views of the Arbman school we have to consult to history of scholarship in this field of research. A concise survey may suffice.

Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871) forms our starting-point. This book apparently also influenced one of the most important histories of Indian religion, Oldenberg's *Religion des Veda* (1917^a). The ethnologist Tylor assumed a unitary soul, i. e. one principle which gives life to the body, co-ordinates the psychic functions, lives inside the body in a more or less immaterial form and leaves the body at death and even temporarily during illness.

Later Wilhelm Wundt (1905-1909) differentiated this pure monism of the soul by distinguishing a 'body-soul' and a 'shadow-soul'. Starting from this distinction Arbman developed a pure dualism of the soul.

In Arbman's system there are two primitive soul-conceptions: a body soul, i. e. a soul which provides life and consciousness, and entirely apart from this an external manifestation of the individual (e. g. during dreams), the so-called Psyche-soul. This was

based on the ancient Greek concept of the image of man which lives on after death (i. e. outside the body) and was called Psyche. This Psyche-soul is a so-called free-soul representing the individual outside the body.

Several scholars have accepted Arbman's theory of the dualism of the soul. Arbman's pupils Hultkrantz (1953) and Paulson (1958) have applied it on the material of the North-American Red Indians and of the North-eurasic peoples. It was even used in analysing the early Greek conceptions of the soul (Bremmer 1983).

It is strange that this dualistic analysis was hardly criticised. It is not clearly based on the ideas of the studied cultures themselves. The primitives do not say that they have a double soul or two conceptions of the soul. Of course one may hypothesize such a dualism in order to arrange the disconnected data, but it is doubtful whether it ever had any meaning for early or primitive cultures themselves. In the modern, Western conception of the soul this entity leaves the body only at death. An external (i. e. extracorporeal) existence of the individual is missing during lifetime. This implies that in our views the activity of the soul outside the body (as found in anthropological material on dreams) should form an opposition to the situation in which the soul remains inside the body. In our analysis we assume a dualism of two souls, because we observe two antithetic yet complementary manifestations. It is questionable whether in the studied cultures the soul, which leaves the body during lifetime, was distinguished from the soul which lives inside the body and leaves it at death. Perhaps the temporary and the eternal separation from the body made no difference in their views.

This is not to say that only one, unitary conception of the soul existed in these cultures. Rather we find an evident pluralism of soul-conceptions. It is the researcher who arranges this pluralistic material and hypothesizes a unitary or a dualistic concept of the soul which may be denoted by several names,

The background of this dualism also needs more explanation. Arbman's pupil Hultkrantz rejects the structuralistic approach. The conception of two souls based on two tribal moieties and associated with nether world and upper world may have existed in some clans of Red Indians, but it is not generally current and therefore may not serve as a starting-point for an explanation. This rejection, however, implies that the most acceptable interpretation (i. e. the one which starts from the studied culture itself) is lost.

Even as a modern, rational systematisation this distinction of a body-soul connected with a person who is awake and a free-soul active during the passivity of the body, is quite problematic. This may be illustrated by an example. The soul-conception of breath has no relation to this opposition of being awake and being asleep.

Moreover, it is not clear how soul-conceptions like shadow, echo, the image in the mirror, the manikin in the eye etc. should be fitted in this framework. These items are not functions of the body. Nevertheless they do not act only during dreams and loss of consciousness.

Arbman tried to eliminate this evident pluralism by assuming several forms and levels of existence of the person which do not act simultaneously. This rather forced explanation might as well be used in defence of a monism of the soul rather than of a dualism, since according to Arbman body-soul and free-soul likewise do not act simultaneously. This solution therefore abolishes pluralism as well as dualism.

Arbman's pupil Hultkrantz has to admit that often the dualism of the soul is not quite obvious. In order to solve this problem he employs theories developed by the French sociologist Lévy-Bruhl (1927), e. g. the so-called law of participation, which assumes that several manifestations such as the shadow participate in the person. These manifestations were extensions of the personality rather than real manifestations of the free-soul (though they act outside the body). In this way some awkward conceptions of the soul are

eliminated in order to save the dualism. However, it is doubtful whether the informants themselves were conscious of these subtle distinctions between soul and extensions or participations of the personality hypothesized by scholars. The material provided by primitive cultures may be arranged at will by scholars. In a recent book on the soul Hasenfratz (1986) gives as addendum an extensive survey of soul-conceptions, but he rightly observes that his classification has no more pretensions than presenting the material in a well-organized form. In the case of early cultures which have transmitted texts, the situation is different. We shall see later on that these so-called extensions and participations figure in Upaniṣadic enumerations of soul-conceptions. It is true that they are rejected as true manifestations of the *ātman*, but the fact that they play a role in the discussions on the *ātman* proves that at least some people connected them with the regular conceptions of the soul.

This reference to the Vedic texts brings me to another observation on the probability or improbability of a dualism of the soul. If such a dualism would have been relevant in the Vedic period (before the development of the theory of the *ātman*), one might expect some traces of it in Vedic literature which is characterized by classifications and systematisations. They are missing. The Vedic texts do not structuralize the soul-conceptions in a dualism of the soul (i. e. of body-soul and a free-soul).

The first criticism of this dualistic interpretation was expressed by Fischer (1965) in his study of Oceanic conceptions of the soul. According to Fischer dualism only applies to two items which either form an opposition or together constitute a unity. The twofold totality (i. e. the idea of one soul manifesting itself twofoldly) according to Fischer would not exist in the studied cultures, but only be based on the Western conception of one, unitary soul.

Fischer rightly emphasizes the ideas of the studied culture itself as starting-points for the formulation of definitions. The term soul is specific for particular cultures and therefore cannot indiscriminately be applied to any culture. To Fischer it is questionable

whether we may use this term in denoting e. g. the manifestation of the individual outside the body during dreams. Consequently he has developed a new terminology. However, it is doubtful whether we may apply Fischer's terminology to the Vedic material, since the Oceanic and the Vedic conceptions belong to rather different cultures. Moreover, the introduction of a new terminology makes the communication very difficult (Bremmer 1983, p. 5). Therefore, though rejecting Arbman's ideas on the dualism of the soul I retain his terminology. The term soul will be used as a collective term denoting a variety of conceptions concerning personality and life in opposition to the body which without this so-called soul does not function.

Moreover I follow Fischer in taking the studied culture as starting-point. The difference between primitive cultures, studied by anthropologists who use theories and models and may manipulate the material by a particular way of asking questions from the informants, and early cultures which have transmitted texts, is that these early cultures at least partly should be studied with philological methods. This is not to say that theories developed in studying primitive cultures should be left out of account. The texts of these early cultures, however, have to be examined on the basis of their own cultural background. These texts contain references to concepts also figuring in the anthropological material, but they have their own systematisation. One can also trace developments in these texts. When at a certain stage a more or less unitary soul-concept is found, this is not a discovery of a biased researcher who already was looking for this.

Now it is interesting to see that all kinds of so-called primitive conceptions of the soul in Vedic literature are associated with the Sanskrit term *ātman*, which in some contexts represents a generic concept like the English word 'soul'. Just as anthropologists speak about the life-soul, the body-soul, the image-soul etc. and in this way include rather divergent ideas in this collective term 'soul' even so the Upaniṣads collect various conceptions in identifications with the *ātman*. As already observed before, these identifications are not

accepted by the authors of the Upaniṣads or they are regarded as only the partial truth. Still these passages in the Upaniṣads show that somehow a unity was assumed and that we may use one term, let us say 'soul', in order to classify these conceptions.

In Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2, 1 and Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad 4 Gārgya Bālāki and Ajātaśatru have a discussion on the *brahman* and also on its microcosmic (*adhyātma*) aspect, i. e. on the *ātman* or soul. Gārgya mentions several conceptions of the soul like the person in the mirror and in the water (i. e. the reflection or the image-soul), the echo and the sound which follows a walking man, the shadow, the manikin in the eye etc. Ajātaśatru rejects these *adhyātma* manifestations of the *brahman* and as a modern anthropologist classifies them as the counterpart, the double, the companion etc. and ultimately teaches Gārgya about the microcosmic *brahman* by showing him a sleeping man and explaining the situation of the person consisting of *viññāna* during sleep. So it is clear that the subject of the discussion was the soul and that Gārgya regarded the shadow, the image in the mirror and the manikin in the eye as possible conceptions of the soul. The traditionalist Gārgya, a Brahmin, expressed some old ideas about the soul. The innovating Kṣatriya Ajātaśatru put forward some more or less philosophical conceptions about the soul, but it is not clear how he conceived the relation between his soul-concept and the traditional conceptions of the soul which he does not deny; he only refuses to accept them as the *ātman* which is identical with the *brahman*.

After this treatment of general problems concerning the research on conceptions of the soul, in which already some references to Vedic literature were made, I will discuss the Vedic material. It is not very rich in the oldest texts. This may be surprising in view of the fact that so much material has been collected by ethnologists among primitive cultures. However, Hultkrantz (1953, p. 36) also observed that by Amerindians themselves "the soul of man is rarely mentioned". The interests of researchers and informants do not always coincide. In Indology literature on the Vedic conceptions of the soul is not very extensive.

Oldenberg, as observed before, followed Tylor in assuming a unitary soul-concept. The relation between shadow-soul, image in the mirror, the manikin-*puruṣa* the *means* residing in the heart and the rather physical power *asu* active inside the whole body does not become quite clear. Especially the interaction between *asu* and *means* is problematic for Oldenberg. By assuming a union of *means* and *asu* after death he tries to save the unitary soul concept.

In 1927 Arbman characterized Tuxen's monograph on the Vedic ideas about the soul (1919), which was published in Danish and not read by many scholars outside Scandinavia, as the only available, really critical study of the Vedic conceptions of the soul (Arbman 1927, p. 2). Tuxen, as remarked before, denied the existence of any concept of the soul before the Upaniṣads. Indeed, he showed that in the *Ṛgvedasaṃhitā* a unitary soul-concept was missing, but in my view this does not exclude a pluralism of soul-concepts. Actually Tuxen disputes Oldenberg's monistic interpretation as far as the oldest Veda is concerned and only accepts the Upaniṣadic conception of the soul since it is unitary in his view.

Arbman criticizes Tuxen. His own views may be summarized as follows. There is a free-soul *puruṣa* and further there are several body-souls like *prāṇa* (breath, breath-soul), *ātman* (likewise interpreted as breath-soul), *asu* (life, life-soul) and *manas* (consciousness, originally an ego-soul). Together these would form a dualistic pluralism of soul-conceptions. According to Arbman several body-souls like *ātman* and *manas* early developed into what he called "einheitliche Seelenbegriffe" ("unitary soul-concepts"). The *manas* e. g. were a combination of an ego-soul (i. e. body-soul) and a secondary (free-soul) in late Vedic texts.

Dandekar (1938) did not participate in the discussion on monism, dualism and pluralism. He was mainly interested in concepts like *mana*, *orenda* and soul-substance. In 1945 Abegg wrote a monograph on Indian psychology in which the information on the Vedic conceptions of the soul was exclusively based on Oldenberg's ideas (published half a century ago).

Summarizing we may state that generally the Sanskrit terms *asu* and *manas* have been regarded as the soul-concepts of the oldest period of the Veda and that for the later period most scholars have assumed one, unitary concept denoted as *ātman* or *puruṣa*, the self or person. I refer to Paul Horsch (1971, p. 113) who observed that in the oldest period we find the concept of a physical-impersonal vital power *asu* and of a spiritual principle *manas*, to which later was added the idea of a breath soul (*prāṇa*) and finally of the *ātman* (by him connected with German "Atem", breath). This arrangement and evolution looks convenient, but the material of the texts is less unambiguous.

As already observed before, we may assume that the mentioned soul-concepts like the person in the mirror and the shadow were already current in the oldest Vedic period. This divergency cannot be pressed into a conveniently arranged classification. The evolution of soul-conceptions (assumed by Arbman and Horsch) does not take into account the fact that several old ideas lived on after the development of new, more evolved conceptions. It is also not quite clear how this fusion of rather divergent concepts took place.

In view of this uncertain situation I concentrate on the mutual relation of the several soul-concepts as well as on their relation to, on the one hand, the so-called primitive conceptions current in anthropological literature, and, on the other hand, the highly developed ideas of the Upaniṣads. The chronology of the texts is not decisive. More important in my view is the cultural background of the texts.

In this connection the word *asu* is interesting, because it is evidently to be associated with rather primitive conceptions. A fundamental difference between *asu* and *prāṇa* (both originally vital powers and rightly or wrongly connected with the breath by scholars) is that *asu* hardly played a role in the well-known micro-macrocosmic identifications. This means that *asu* is not interesting for the later, philosophical ideas. Scholars like Arbman and Horsch assert that *asu* should be a body-soul which was eclipsed by *prāṇa* and *ātman*.

In later Vedic texts. Here some questions crop up. How did such a development take place? Are we confronted with just a terminological change? Are *asu*, *prāṇa* and *ātman* really interchangeable as so-called life-souls?

In my opinion we should not start from the hypothetical construction of developments and replacements. Rather we should emphasize the cultural diversity of the texts and contexts in which these terms occur. Moreover, it is questionable whether *asu* should be a pure body-soul. In the past scholars have often regarded *asu*, *prāṇa* and *ātman* as three breath-souls on account of wrong etymologies. However, only *prāṇa* can be connected with the root *an* - 'to breathe'.

It can be demonstrated that even in old texts *asu* already functions as a so-called free-soul rather than as a body-soul. This *asu*-concept plays an important role in passages where illness and the process of dying is described. These texts do not belong to the philosophical tradition. We find *asu* in the circles of the Atharvaveda, where shamanistic practices are carried out in the case of soul-loss. On the other hand the term *prāṇa* instead of *asu* is used in the circles of the priests whose formulations of ideas in the Brāhmaṇas prepare the early philosophy of the Upaniṣads. The *asu* is not a specific vital power. It is primarily a soul which may leave the body. Its permanent departure from the body means the end of life.

It is remarkable that in the more philosophical Upaniṣads *asu* hardly occurs. Here we should take into account that the old texts in which *asu* was found presupposed a strong attachment to earthly life. The *asu* should be recovered during illness. In the Upaniṣads as well as in the Brāhmaṇas, however, a growing interest may be discovered in the psychological mechanism, in the identification of the essential entity in man with the highest cosmic principle and in the liberation from earthly life. Here no role was reserved for the *asu*. This is a cultural shift. The Swedish scholar Åke Hultkrantz has emphasized the psychological shifts in his analysis of the

development of soul-conceptions and his compatriot Ivar Paulson even assumes that this analysis is universally usable. The example of the Vedic conceptions of the soul, however, shows that the soul-concept cannot exclusively be interpreted on the psychological level and that it should not be isolated from religious and philosophical thought.

In the Upaniṣads *asu* occurs in association with primitive conceptions of the soul like the reflection in the mirror, the shadow etc. In Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad 4, 13 the person in the echo is explained by Ajātaśatru as *asu*. I. e. *asu* is some sort of free-soul outside the body. The German philosopher and Indologist Deussen observes on this passage in his translation of the Upaniṣads (1905): "Das (bewusste) Leben besteht darin, dass die Eindrücke der Dinge in uns, wie die Töne im Echo, einen Widerfall finden" ("Conscious life means that the impression of objects are echoed in man just like sounds"). Obviously, however, *asu* here represents the echo-soul which is current in anthropological literature. Another recension of this text connects *asu* with the sound which follows a walking man: again a primitive soul-conception. In the parallel text Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2, 1, 10 Ajātaśatru likewise explains the *asu* as this sound. Here the person in the directions of space (i. e. the echo) is explained by Ajātaśatru as the companion (*devīya*) or, as the anthropologists would say, the double. There are some variations in these parallel versions. It is clear that the echo should be associated with the *asu* and the second which follows a person with the companion. Like the echo-soul in anthropological literature the *asu* also has connections with the realm of the dead. Obviously such as *asu* is not a body-soul.

In his further explanations Ajātaśatru states that he who knows this equation does not lose his life before his time (BĀUp.) or does not lose his consciousness before his time (KauṣUp.). So *asu* is also associated with life, especially with the loss of life or the loss of consciousness (i. e. the situation in which the soul temporarily leaves the body).

In BĀUp. 3, 9, 15 the person in the mirror (i. e. the image-soul, a free-soul) is called *asu*. In case a body-soul also acts as a free-soul Arbman and his successors assume a development from a body-soul to a secondary free-soul or to a so-called "psychological free-soul", a development which may culminate in a monism of the soul.

With regard to the apparent or real double role of *asu* Arbman concludes that the Vedic Indians already had a more or less unitary concept of the soul in which body-soul and psyche (i. e. the free-soul) were fused.

Such a development into a secondary free-soul in combination with a fusion of free-soul and body-soul is difficult to be proved, since in the old Vedic texts the *asu* already acts as a free-soul. Moreover *asu* hardly plays a role in the development from pluralism to monism of the soul. In Arbman's Vedic evolution of the soul-concept *asu* was originally a body-soul and *puruṣa* (the person or manikin) the real free-soul. This *asu* would have adopted the function of the *puruṣa* as part of a shift to monism of the soul. It is, however, remarkable that in the Upaniṣads *asu* nowhere acts as the one and only soul-concept and is mentioned together with several outdated, primitive conceptions of the soul.

Actually *asu* belongs to different aspects of the pluralism of the soul in different contexts. Indeed it does not exclusively represent the free-soul outside the body. One may even find *asu* in an enumeration of more or less mental aspects of the soul like *kratu* ("will, creative power") and *kāma* ("desire"), an enumeration which is concluded with the remark that all these items are only names of *prajñāna* ("knowledge, insight") (Āitareya Upaniṣad 5, 2). This does not mean that *asu* should be interpreted as a mental activity or a mental power on the basis of this single, incidental passage. The *asu* represents consciousness or rather we should say that its presence in the body is the necessary condition for this consciousness. This was also observed by Ajātaśatru in the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, where he connected *asu* with *sammoha* ("loss

of consciousness"). This very aspect of *asu* qualifies it as a free-soul in Arbman's definition: it provides consciousness, but does not represent it as such. Arbman and his successors define the free-soul as not active in the body, but forming the necessary condition for mental activities by its presence. Strange enough Arbman regards the *asu* as an original body-soul rather than as a free-soul.

The information of the oldest Vedic text on *asu* is scarce. In the Ṛgvedasamhitā it occurs ten times, mostly with the rather unspecific meaning 'life'. The frequency in the Atharvavedasamhitā is doubled. Here the cultural difference between the two Samhitās rather than their relative chronology is important. The word is especially used in contexts where dying plays a role. This is also the case in the Ṛgvedasamhitā. Schlerath (1968) also draws attention to *asu*'s connection with the cult of the dead in a paper on this term. Unfortunately he did not take into account Arbman's publications on the Vedic conceptions of the soul and he mainly concentrated his attention on the etymology of the word (*asu* derived from *as* 'to be'). In the context of the cult of the dead he interprets *asu* as "the being or existence after death" ("Leben nach dem Tode"). In the Ṛgveda *asu* denotes existence rather than vital breath, undefined life rather than a specific bodily function, according to Schlerath. This rejection of *asu* as a body-soul in the Ṛgvedasamhitā may be correct, but Schlerath seems to overlook the fact that *asu* may act as a free-soul.

The analysis of the compounds *asutṛp* and *asunīti* (occurring in the Ṛgvedasamhitā) shows that already in the oldest text *asu* denotes a particular conception of the soul.

The compound *asutṛp* means "robbing the *asu*" and refers to the dogs of the god of death, Yama, who fetch the soul of man. It also denotes the sorcerers who produce soul-loss through magic. Temporarily one can live without the *asu* (i. e. it is not a real body-soul), but the continuing separation of body and *asu* produces death. Therefore the priests try to get back the *asu* which has already left the body during illness. In Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa 3,

168-169 we read that king Asamāti used two sorcerers who robbed the soul (*asu*) of Subandhu. Subandhu faints, but does not die and recovers his *asu*. These two sorcerers may also be regarded as *asutr̥p*. The context proves that *asu* here perfectly suits the definition of a free soul, whose presence in the body is required for life, but which does not represent a life-soul itself.

Schlerath is wrong in interpreting the *asutr̥p* dogs in the Ṛgveda as destroying man's *asu* between heaven and earth. These dogs roam about on earth and fetch the *asu* of man who dies on account of the permanent separation of body and *asu*. Ṛgvedasamhitā 10, 14, 12 observes that these *asutr̥p* dogs roam about among the human beings as Yama's messengers. We may compare the Sāvitrī story in the Mahābhārata, where Sāvitrī says to Yama : " It is heard, O adorable one, that your messengers come to the human beings. Why, then, O lord, have you come yourself in order to fetch (*netum*) (my husband) as we may assume? " (Pativratā-māhātmyam 5, 12). These dogs do not kill the *asu* of man on its way to heaven in order to destroy man's life forever, as Schlerath assumes. They come to fetch (*netum*) the *asu* and may be compared with the *asutr̥p* sorcerers of RV. 10, 87, 14 and JB. 3, 168-169. That the loss of such a soul may be not permanent appears from the mentioned passage in the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa and also from the story of Sāvitrī, where Yama first draws this soul, here called an *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* (" a person or manikin having the size of a thumb ", a current primitive conception of the soul in anthropological literature), from the body, walks away and after a long discussion gives it back to the husband of Sāvitrī (5, 55 ff.). Therefore the priests try to recover the *asu* which is robbed by Yama and his messengers or by sorcerers.

Schlerath's second mistake is that he interprets *asunīti* as the guidance of the *asu* (and its protection against the *asutr̥ps*) or as the guidance towards the *asu* conceived as the life in yonder world. The root *nī* often refers to leading away or carrying off for oneself (e. g. in connection with the young bride) rather than to protecting guidance. The *asunīti* of the Ṛgvedasamhitā refers to the same

situation as described in the story of Sāvitrī, where Yama or his messengers are said to fetch (*netum*) the soul. The dictionaries misinterpret this compound and often make it refer to the realm of the dead. However, *asunītiṃ gam* does not mean " to go to the *asunīti* " but " to go to the path of the *asunīti* " (RV. 10, 16, 2). This *asunīti* is even deified as a female deity (since *asunīti* is a feminine word). As such it represents Yama or rather his activity. In the context of RV. 10, 59, 5-6 the loss of man's *asu* in general and especially Subandhu's soul-loss are at stake and one wants to recover this *asu*. It is obvious that the invoked *Asunīti* is the power who has taken away the soul or has fetched it (i. e. the *asunetr̥*) rather than the one who safely guides the *asu*. Thus already in the Ṛgvedasamhitā the *asu* is more than just life. It is the soul which leaves the body and produces death in the case of lasting absence. As such it is a free-soul according to Arbman's definition.

Now one may ask what exactly is the function of this *asu* during lifetime. There are some passages (not many) in which body and *asu* occur together as body and soul. Atharvavedasamhitā 5, 29, 5 observes that the body contains flesh and *asu*. In Vādhūla Sūtra 4, 101 the sun is the body and the *asu* of the fire. According to Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa 1, 13, 2, 1 all creatures live on account of the *asu*. Atharvavedasamhitā 7, 2, 1 declares that the mother produces the embryo and the father the *asu*. These aspects of the *asu* refer to some sort of body-soul.

When we combine these occasional data with what has been observed before on the *asu* as a free-soul, we might design a monism of the soul. One might even assume with Arbman a development from an original body-soul to a free-soul and ultimately to a monism of the soul. Unfortunately such a development cannot be traced in the Vedic texts, since both aspects of the *asu* (the internal and the extra-corporeal) already occur in the oldest texts. In most texts the *asu* is a free-soul. In the case of *asu* the monism of the soul is a construction of scholars based on a philological combination of some stray references. Moreover several other conceptions of the

the soul occur side by side with the *asu*. In the development of a more philosophical monism of the soul this *asu* does not play an important role.

In as far as the *asu* is connected with the body, it is rather vitalistic and impersonal: just life. Such characteristics, however, do not disqualify other Vedic soul-conceptions for an important role in the later tradition.

In this connection we may compare the term *jīva*, which like *asu* only denotes life. Already in the (late) first book of the Rgveda, however, *jīva* seems to represent a soul-concept. Geldner may be right in translating this *jīva* in 1, 164, 30 by soul ("Seele"). In this verse there is an opposition between life and death, between the immortal and the mortal part of man. This *jīva* apparently does not only denote the life-soul, but also the soul which lives on after death. The context is philosophical, not (as in the case of *asu*) magical.

This *jīva* occurs again in a much later text, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, even in connection with *ātman* (ChUp. 6, 11, 1-3). The *jīva ātman* in the form of the compound *jīvātman* later constitutes the technical term for the individual soul.

Just like *jīva* the *asu* might have developed into an important soul-concept in later times. The vitalistic aspect of *asu* did not form a hindrance. A late Upaniṣad like the Maitrāyaṇīya still denotes the *jīva*-soul by the qualification *prāṇasaṃjñaka* ("bearing the name of breath"). The term *jīva*, however, apparently did not have the same shamanistic and magical background as *asu*.

As observed before, mostly *asu* and *manas* are associated by scholars as the principles of life and consciousness (at least as far as the oldest texts are concerned). As a vital soul, however, *prāṇa* rather than *asu* is dominating (especially in the later texts). In the bio-psychological theories *prāṇa* (breath) plays a more and more important role and ultimately eclipses even *manas* as the central soul. In Upaniṣads like the Kauṣītaki and the Maitrāyaṇīya the *prāṇa* actually is the *ātman*.

Reaching this position the originally vitalistic *prāṇa* met with little competition from *asu*, because the unspecific concept of *asu* hardly played a role in the classifications of the vital powers found in the Brāhmaṇas. These classifications were also combined with identifications. Here the position of *manas* turned out to be weaker than that of *prāṇa*, since this *manas* was only equated with the moon, whereas *prāṇa* represented the microcosmic equivalent of the macrocosmic life force. Already in the Atharvavedasambhitā this *prāṇa* was cosmified in a philosophical hymn (AV. 11, 4). The cosmic *prāṇa* is more than just wind. It is the highest power and breath is its microcosmic equivalent. Here the *brahman-ātman* identification is prepared. In the ritualistic texts we find tripartite identifications (*adhidaivam*, *adhiyajñam*, *adhyātmam*) in which *prāṇa* forms the counterpart of the sacred fire and the sun (rather than the wind). The Agni Vaiśvānara of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 10, 6, 1 is replaced by the Ātman Vaiśvānara in Chāndogya Upaniṣad 5, 11. This Ātman is the *prāṇa*. The Ātmayajña par excellence is the Prāṇāgnihotra (Bodewitz 1973). Moreover *prāṇa* obtained the central position in the discussions on the vital powers in man. All the vital powers (including *manas*) consequently came to be called *prāṇas*. This position was never reached by *asu*, which just remained life as such. The *prāṇa* has its seat in the heart which is also the seat of the soul in several cultures. The *asu* has no specific place in the body. Its general meaning "life, existence" still appears in the Vādhūla Sūtra 4, 108, where rice and barley are called *nediṣṭhaḥ* (thus should be read instead of *nediṣṭham*) *paśūnām asuḥ*. Caland incorrectly translates "der den Tieren am nächsten stehenden Lebenshauch" ("the lifebreath which has the closest relationship to animals"). I would prefer to translate: "the existence or form of life which comes closest to that of the domesticated animals". Here it is neither breath nor soul.

The *prāṇa* did not become one of the most important soul-concepts on account of an extension of its activities from life-soul (i. e. body-soul) to free-soul (a development assumed for *asu* by Arbman). Its central position is due to ritualistic and philosophical

speculations. This is the most important difference between *prāṇa* and *asu*.

I will conclude with some remarks on the concept of *ātman*. It is questionable whether *ātman* ever has been a conception of the soul like *asu* or *prāṇa*. Several scholars have assumed that *ātman* developed from an original breath soul into a unitary soul-concept in the Upaniṣads. Though an etymological connection with German "Atem" (breath) is possible, a derivation from the Sanskrit root *an-* "to breathe" has to be rejected. In Vedic literature *prāṇa* rather than *ātman* denotes the breath. Already in the oldest texts *ātman* refers to being, essence or self. It is also a reflexive pronoun. In the Vedic prose texts it may even denote the body.

Arbman sketched the following development. The *ātman*-concept would concern the self as well as the breath. The Upaniṣadic *ātman* were a combination of the life-soul and consciousness, i. e. of on the one hand *ātman-prāṇa-asu* and on the other hand *manas*. As already observed before, this fusion of heterogeneous elements has to be rejected. It is more important to examine the relation between *prāṇa* and *ātman*. The difference between these two concepts is that *prāṇa* has a specific function in the body and as such has obtained the supremacy over other vital functions in the classifications of the vital powers, whereas *ātman* is unspecific. The *prāṇa* became the microcosmic counterpart of the highest cosmic principle and thus prepared the way for the identification of *ātman* and *brahman*. Unlike *prāṇa* and the sun the *ātman* and the *brahman* are not concrete (whatever may have been their etymological origin). The *ātman* is just the self. As such it forms together with the *brahman* the final result of the originally rather concrete micro-macrocosmic identifications in which it hardly participated in the beginning. Just like *puruṣa* (the person, originally perhaps an image-soul) *ātman* cannot be concretized as a soul-concept. Already in 1930 Betty Heimann observed that *ātman* as the undifferentiated personality-concept is only a label which is not yet filled out. This is, I think, the reason why the debates in the late Brāhmaṇas and in the Upaniṣads mostly concern questions like :

What do you regard as the *ātman*? What do you regard as the *brahman*? Therefore *ātman* was the ideal technical term for soul in the philosophical speculations. This *ātman* is not the final stage of a development in which primitive conceptions of the soul like body-soul and free-soul became fused, as assumed by some scholars. It belongs to the final stage of reflections on man and his relation to the highest cosmic principle.

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